

An Analysis of Weavers' Migration to the GCC Countries: A Case Study of Mau District in Uttar Pradesh

Dr. Md Firdos Ahmad¹, Aneesur Rahman^{2*}

¹Associate Professor, Department of Economics, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India

²Research Scholar, Department of Economics, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India

***Corresponding Author**

Email: aneesurrahman05@gmail.com

Abstract

Weaving is an important part of the socio-economic growth of every country. It is one of the primary sources of income, especially in rural areas. Due to various pull and push factors, the weavers started to migrate to the Gulf countries. In the economic reform period, numerous new generations of weavers have seen upward migration trends to Gulf nations for employment, especially to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The big companies began manufacturing daily necessities previously made by village artisan groups. Most of them are working in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs. The study area is limited to the Mau district of Uttar Pradesh, the powerhouse of textile weavers in eastern Uttar Pradesh. Most of the study is based on primary data sources, along with the support of secondary data sources. The study shows increasing trends of young weavers' migration to the GCC countries. Sample data indicates that 62 percent of migrant weavers work unskilled in the host country. In the GCC countries, migrant weavers aged 21 to 36 account for 74% of the workforce, with more than half earning between INR 18,000 and 23,000 monthly. Only 24% of migrant weavers have finished college or higher education.

Keywords: Weaver, GCC countries, Powerloom, Handloom, Migration, Economic Reforms

1. Introduction:

The textile industry is a significant part of India's cultural and economic heritage. It consists of three main sectors. They are the sectors for mills, power looms, and handlooms. The handloom and the decentralized power loom sectors are the cornerstones of India's rural economies. Regarding the production of fabrics and the creation of jobs, the decentralized power loom is one of the most significant sectors of the textile industry. The ready-made garment and home textile industries rely significantly on the power loom sector. According to M/s Nielsen's baseline power loom survey in 2013, it employs 44.18 lakh people and accounts for 60% of the nation's total fabric production.

More than 60% of fabric intended for export is also sourced from the Power loom sector to arrange the fabric requirement. Handloom weaving, one of the most significant economic activities after agriculture, employs 35.23 lakh weavers and allied workers directly and indirectly. This sector contributes to the nation's export revenue and accounts for nearly 15% of the nation's cloth production. Ninety-five percent of the hand-woven textiles produced worldwide are made in India. (Annual reports, Ministry of Textile, Government of India).

The weaving industry in India is promising for both domestic and international markets because of the craft art found there. The industry does, however, face several challenges, such as a lack of technological expertise, a lack of government support, a lack of management abilities, an unorganized production system, a lack of marketing strategies, a weak marketing link, the use of conventional weaving techniques, the availability of identical products in the market, and a general stagnation in production and sales. The situation of weavers deteriorated after economic reforms in 1991 as the country's economy was liberated. The big companies began manufacturing daily necessities previously made by village artisan groups. Multinational corporations dominate the market because they are well-organized and quickly adapt their products to changing consumer tastes. Due to their large size, companies can produce their products at a lower cost than the decentralized weaving communities. The cost of making products is very high, but returns from selling these goods are incompatible. As a result, many new generations of weavers started moving to Gulf countries in search of employment, particularly to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which is made up of six nations: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The GCC nations are endowed with natural gas and oil, which has helped them to become economic powerhouses in the modern world. It drew laborers from several Indian states. Weavers are also among those migrant laborers. Many of them are working in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs. For the Indian economy, the loss of skilled workers from the textile industry is a significant problem.

2. Review of Literature

By the end of the 19th century, a significant number of weavers from eastern Uttar Pradesh had started to relocate to western India, primarily to areas around the Bombay-Agra route, such as Indore, Dhulia, Dharangaon, Yeola, and Malegaon. Some started handloom weaving, but most found employment in the mill business. Disastrous occurrences in the middle of the 19th century, such as riots at Faizabad and Ayodhya, were to blame for this due to intense competition from global corporations (Haynes, 2012). It is challenging to maintain their customary jobs. Additionally, they need more technical expertise and skills to operate in metropolitan India's modern industrial setting. Plumbing professionals, unskilled laborers on construction sites, and other associations are migrating to the Gulf in greater numbers (Husain and Khan, 2016). A research on the 2010 Handloom Census indicates that there are fewer and fewer handlooms in use. The younger generation needs to be more interested and skeptical. Sadly, it appears that the handloom business is about to disappear. The reason behind this drop is the pay of weavers (Garg, 2015). Mau (an older region of Azamgarh) has been famous for its weavers for generations. However, because of unfavorable government policies, weavers' plight has worsened. People are moving to other cities and changing their ways of living, and the younger generation is migrating to a Gulf nation (Ahmad, 2012). Approximately 10,000 weavers across the eastern U.P. have given up their jobs due to a lack of demand. Although the raw material cost has increased, consumers do not value the result. The result is unemployment. Thus, more and more individuals are finding work as rickshaw pullers, laborers, hawkers, and subzi-walas (vegetable sellers) (Williams, 2011). The condition of weavers has been worse since liberalization (economic reforms) was implemented. The handloom weavers were severely deprived as a result. Suicides by weavers have been reported in daily publications. Additionally, cotton farmers are killing themselves (Chalam, 2011). Numerous studies have noted that economic reforms created opportunities for the educated class as foreign companies opened offices, manufacturing facilities, Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) centers, and other related facilities. Instead of essential businesses like agriculture and household, particularly weaving, which support the livelihoods of millions of people in the country, the expansion has been in the telecommunication, information technology, banking, entertainment, travel, and hospitality sectors. Additionally, it has raised the standard of living and income only for high-income groups. (Siggel & Agrawal, 2009). Despite the expensive and high-quality output, most weavers are not pleased with the financial reward. The middleman is crucial in marketing. However, they make a more significant profit than the weavers. A weaver from this hamlet has yet to register as an entrepreneur despite numerous government measures to help the weaver community. The majority of them rely on the meager revenue they receive from weaving to support their families. (Das and Patasingh, 2023). The current state of traditional handloom weavers in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India, is the subject of the study. Due to the collapse of India's handloom industry following industrialization, Varanasi's handloom weavers are currently dealing with several issues. The development of new technology, capitalist control, a decline in wages, and an increase in yarn prices are among the problems mentioned in the report (Tanusree, 2015). It is clear that the Dakshin Dinajpur district's handloom sector has flourished in the recent past and has a glorious history. However, it is currently having severe problems. The fame of the sector is set to disappear. There are numerous government initiatives to grow the handloom industry in this district. However, they are neither necessary nor enough to improve the industry's current state. Low labor salaries, the result of this labor shortage, unfair competition from the centralized power loom and mill industries, and low labor pay destroy this district's sector daily (Paul, 2019). Globalization has created several opportunities for employment for many people all over the world. In this context, many communities are witnessing a change in their day-to-day life. According to the current study, the lives of people who went to Gulf nations significantly differed. Many emigrants who had previously immigrated bought farmland and took ownership of it by constructing homes with all the essential utilities. Their socio-economic standing has risen more significantly. These families no longer pursue their traditional way of life because they are self-sufficient economically. It has also led to a change in their identity in the village. The first-generation migrants have developed into intermediaries between second-generation aspirants from towns who wish to go to Gulf and Gulf firms looking for fresh personnel (Ch Praveen Kumar, 2017). The Gulf Migration has benefited migrant households economically, but on the other hand, it has negatively impacted non-migrant families belonging to the low, middle, and fixed-income categories (B.A Pralash, 1998). Research in Kerala shows that inequality is on the rise. Despite a solid economic record supported by remittances, Kerala still needs to resolve its long-standing issues of educated unemployment, particularly for its women. In this context, the state's incapacity to employ a higher per capita income to maintain, let alone enhance, its tax-income ratio assumes immense significance and is cause for alarm (K.P Kannan and KS Hari, 2020). The international exchange of knowledge, ideas, and people is one of globalization's most significant effects (Solimano, 2008). According to the study, the conditions facing the weavers are not better. They cannot read and write, are poor financially, suffer from health issues, have meager wages, and receive minimal government assistance, all of which contribute to their weakness (Tawheed Yousuf et al., 2013). Weavers suffer several issues, including financial hardship, the inability to purchase contemporary machinery, appalling working conditions, low pay, and a lack of government help (Sadanandam, 2016). This paper delves into the historical and contemporary occurrence of Indian migrant laborers in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations, specifically in regard to the post-1973 oil era and the economic progress made in these states. Additionally, this paper brings to light the significance of remittance earnings from the Gulf nations for the Indian economy, whereby a majority of India's remittance earnings emanate from these

nations (Azhar, [2016](#)). The study summarizes the primary research results in Bahrain, Oman, and the UAE to comprehend the significant career-related problems experienced by professional Indian expatriates in the GCC nations. Most respondents disagreed with the claim that their organization offered assistance in developing professional abilities. Female respondents noted a more significant level of disagreement. Female respondents expressed greater contradiction with the claim that their jobs gave them plenty of time for career planning than male respondents. The paper concludes with an analysis of the overall findings, which indicate that individual demographic factors significantly impact respondents' perceptions of organizational support for professional skill acquisition and the availability of sufficient time for career planning at work (Naithani, [2013](#)). The study provides insights into labor migration trends, patterns, and policies from Asian countries to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. It highlights that the GCC countries are among the largest recipients of temporary labor migrants, with non-nationals comprising about 47% of their population. Asian workers, mainly from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, constitute a significant stock of migrants, with the proportion of Asian workers increasing over time. The largest recipients of Asian workers are Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, with most migrants being male. However, female workers has consistently increased due to the rising demand for female domestic workers. The migration policies and rules of sending and receiving countries differ, with sending countries aiming to increase outflows and receiving countries seeking to restrict inflows and nationalize the labor force. The paper also highlights that a significant percentage of Asian temporary labor migrants in the GCC countries are unskilled workers, and there is an increasing reliance on domestic workers in the Gulf countries (Shah, [2013](#)). The study explores the links between labor markets, skills, and the migration cycle between India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. It highlights the challenges in ensuring a fair distribution of profits from the migration flow and the need for more information regarding qualifications, skills, wages, and labor demand. The report focuses on the role of skills in India, including skills training, certification, skills matching, and recruitment practices. The paper does not provide specific results or findings but highlights the importance of addressing the issues related to labor demand, skills, and the recruitment process in India-GCC migration (Sasikumar & Timothy, [2015](#)).

3. Objectives of the Study

- To examine the socio-economic status of the study participants.
- To examine the trends of weavers' migration to the GCC countries.
- To examine the factors and reasons for migration to the GCC countries and its economic impact on the households of migrants.

4. Data Sources and Methodology of the Study

This study was based on primary data collected by the researcher through a questionnaire, observation, and scheduled questions. The research area is limited to the Mau district of Uttar Pradesh, the powerhouse of textile weavers in eastern Uttar Pradesh. Cloth-making by power loom and handloom is the main industrial setup of the Mau district. Banarsi silk saree and other cloth are being produced here, showing the weavers' art and craft. The researcher has interacted with 50 households of Gulf migrant weavers selected randomly from the Mau district.

5. Result and Findings

The results of the data analysis assist in developing the study's conclusion. According to the available research, there haven't been many studies on weavers' migration, especially those coming from the Uttar Pradesh district of Mau.

5.1 The Age Group of Migrant Weavers

Figure 1 shows that there is a tendency for migration of young generations of weavers. The highest number of migrant weavers is between the ages of 26 to 31 years. The ages of 21 to 26 and 31 to 36 are second and third, respectively. It is clear from the graph that migrant weavers between the age group 21 to 36 are 74 percent.

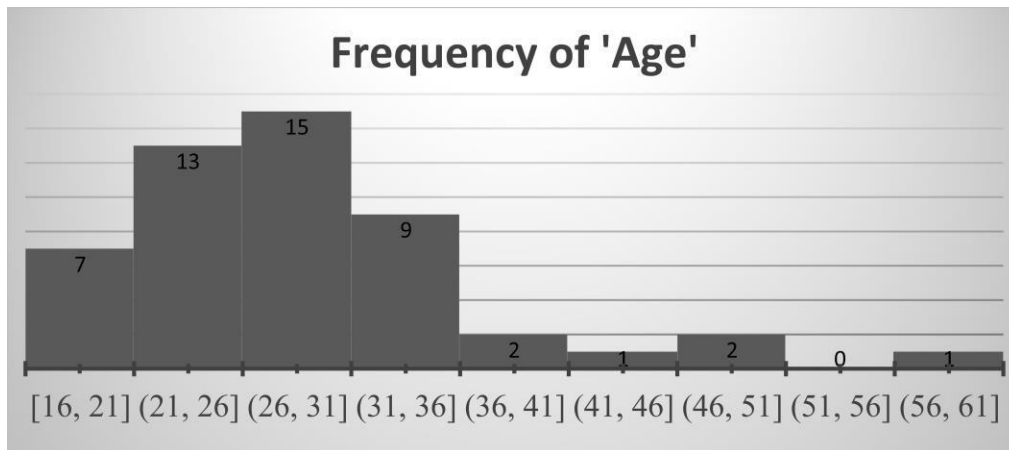


Figure 1 Age Group of Migrant Weavers

Source: Primary Data, 2023

5.2 Destination of Migration, Type of Work, and Duration of Migration

Table 1 illustrates that most sample migrant weavers work in Saudi Arabia. It is the largest migrant destination, with 78 percent, as per the data collected. Saudi Arabia is the most prominent migrant worker among the GCC countries. There are more economic activities. More economic activities are demanding more labor. United Arab Emirates (UAE) is the second destination of weavers' migration. Migration to Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar is comparatively less.

Table 2 shows that 62 percent of migrant weavers work unskilled in the host country. Participation of migrant weavers in Skilled and semi-skilled work comes second and third with 22 and 16 percent, respectively. Those who are engaged in skilled labor have taken higher education.

Table 3 indicates that 82 percent of migrant weavers have been working in the GCC countries for less than ten years. Migrants who have worked in these countries for over ten years are only 18 percent. It shows that migrant weavers to the GCC countries are a recent phenomenon. This is due to the economic vulnerability of weaving art. The entire family of weavers work together on a handloom or power loom to earn hardly 10 to 15 thousand monthly.

Table 1: Destination of Migration

name of the host country	Percentage
Saudi Arabia	78.00%
UAE	14.00%
Kuwait	4.00%
Oman	2.00%
Qatar	2.00%
Grand Total	100.00%

Source: Primary Data, 2023

Table 2: Kind of Works

orks in theGulf	Percentage
Unskilled work	62.00%
Skilled work	22.00%
Semi-skilled work	16.00%
Grand Total	100.00%

Source: Primary Data, 2023

Table 3: Duration of Migration

Time duration	percentage
1-3 years	24.00%
4-6years	24.00%
Less than 1 year	22.00%
More than 10 years	18.00%
7-10 years	12.00%
Grand Total	100.00%

Source: Primary Data, 2023

5.3 Educational Status of Migrant Weavers

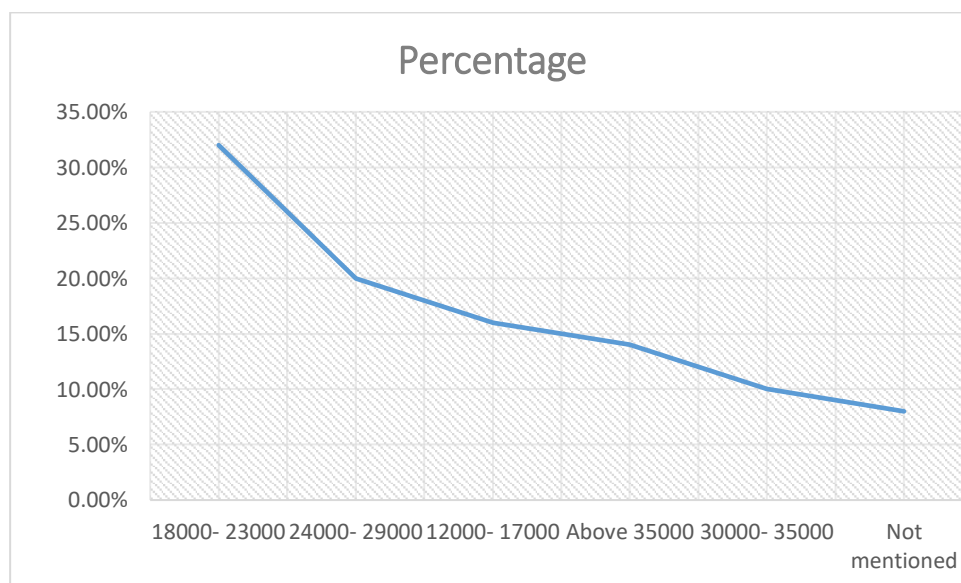
Table 4 and Figure 2 points out that most migrant weavers' educational status is between 6th and 10th standard. It accounts for 26 percent. Religious and educational background, as per the sampled data, is beyond 20 percent. Only 24 percent of migrant weavers have completed graduation or above.

Table 4 Educational Status of Migrant Weavers

Educational Qualification	Percentage
High School Or less	26.00%
Other	22.00%
Primary	14.00%
Intermediate	14.00%
Graduation	12.00%
Post-Graduation	12.00%
Grand Total	100.00%

Source: Primary Data, 2023

Figure 2 Income of Migrant Weaver



Source: Primary Data, 2023

Table 5: Income, Type of work, and Educational Status

Monthly Income	Kind of Works	Educational Qualification	Total
12000- 17000	Unskilled work	High School Or less	4
		Other	3
	Semi-skilled work	High School Or less	1
12000- 17000 Total			8
18000- 23000	Unskilled work	High School Or less	4
		Intermediate	3
		Other	2
		Primary	7
18000- 23000 Total			16
24000- 29000	Unskilled work	Intermediate	1
		Other	6
	Semi-skilled work	Intermediate	1
	Skilled work	Graduation	1
24000- 29000 Total			9
24000- 30000	Semi-skilled work	Intermediate	1
24000- 30000 Total			1
30000- 35000	Semi-skilled work	High School Or less	3
		Unskilled work	1
		Skilled work	1
30000- 35000 Total			5
Above 35000	Skilled work	Graduation	2
		Post-Graduation	3
	Semi-skilled work	Graduation	2
Above 35000 Total			7
Not mentioned	Skilled work	Graduation	1
		Intermediate	1
		Post-Graduation	2
Not mentioned Total			4
Grand Total			50

Source: Primary Data, 2023

5.4 Income, Skill, and Education:

It is evident from Table 5 that most migrant weavers who earn between INR 30000 and 35000 rupees are engaged in skilled or semi-skilled work. The migrant with unskilled labor making INR 30000-35000 works for years or is an employee of any high-paid company. The income group above INR 35000 belongs to migrants with skills and high educational qualifications, as the sample data shows. The "Not mentioned" category belongs to highly educated and skillful employees.

6. Reasons and Factors of Weavers' Migration to the GCC Countries:

According to the sample respondents, more than the earning is needed even to fulfill the basic needs of life from weaving fabrics. There is a continuous recession in the decentralized textile sector. The power loom and handloom situation is going down with every passing day. The government is doing nothing for their betterment. Recently, the government has increased Power loom electricity from a flat rate of 75 rupees monthly per loom to 400 rupees. This pulled the weaving community into worse conditions. Master weavers exploit the general public of the weaving community. Master Weaver is called Seth or Girhast in the local language. They are migrating to the Gulf nation for several life needs, such as building a home, arranging marriage requirements in the family, and making a better educational environment for their children, as sample participants responded according to their needs. For weavers, there are more earnings in the GCC countries than working on power looms or handlooms.

7. Challenges and Problems in the Host Country:

There are several problems for migrant weavers in the host country, as per respondents of the study, such as long duty, low salary, working in the heat, exploitation, language barrier, and no proper facility for working and residing. Most of the problems belong to unskilled workers. Therefore, Weavers emphasized that Gulf migration is a temporary solution for their economic needs.

8. Some Recommendations for the Betterment of Weavers:

In the opinion of weavers, the migration to the Gulf nations is a short-term response to their economic requirements. Therefore, the central and state governments must assist the textile industry. The state government should grant all necessary approvals to encourage speedy business investment, including constructing joint wastewater treatment plants. The study makes some potential recommendations for textile weaving.

8.1 Market Research

A weaver can increase their power loom or handloom products by conducting comprehensive market research to learn about customers' wants, new ideas, and unique designs.

8.2 Social message on Fashion Products

It is one of the most effective marketing techniques for drawing customers to textile goods. Weavers should emphasize individuals' empathic and emotional characteristics so that customers are drawn to their offerings. Social topics like environmental issues and other thematic messages that can be imaginatively handled can be painted by a weaver. Such creative product concepts affect consumers' purchasing decisions.

8.3 Focus on the Local Market.

India is a developing nation with a dynamic economy. Local markets are more convenient to offer things in than global ones. At this time, the worldwide market is looking for green products. The weaver now has a fantastic chance to demonstrate their talent by selling their goods.

8.4 Education and Skill Enhancement

Gearing up weavers with skills can help change their thinking to comprehend the needs of the domestic and international markets by developing their abilities throughout their academic careers. It makes it easier for them to combine old and modern techniques.

8.5 Setting up a Local Training Centre

Creating a local training facility will be crucial in improving unskilled and inadequately trained weavers. It will help weavers learn more about contemporary technologies and how to use fresh craft ideas.

8.6 Cluster Society

The weaver should have access to raw material supplies, dyeing, printing, and other facilities through the cluster society. According to society, the needs of the weaver should be satisfied by the availability of training. The leadership and teamwork actions of the weavers will enhance the cluster community.

8.7 Customer's Direct link with Producer

The producer can earn a lot of money through direct links with customers. In some regions, the presence of intermediaries did not benefit the actual weavers from this work.

9. Conclusion

The study analyses the trends of weavers' migration from the Mau district to the GCC in the post-reform period. It is clear from the study that the migration of weavers, especially the young generation, increased in the post-reform period. Although their economic needs are somehow being fulfilled by working in the Gulf countries, weavers are not in a good educational and economic situation. The weaving sector is sinking. Weavers are equipped with craft and creativity in their profession. The loss of skilled laborers (in case of their migration) is a significant concern for the Indian economy. They make a substantial contribution to the economy of the country. The government can create mandi for selling and marketing their products and other requirements. Thus, Weavers can play a significant role in the "Make in India" campaign if adequately guided.

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